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Guest: REPRESENTATIVE CHET HOLIFIELD (D., Cal.)
Chairman, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy

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Panel: MARQUIS CHILDS, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*
ROBERT MCCORMICK, *NBC News*
JACK RAYMOND, *The New York Times*
RICHARD RESTON, *Madison (Wis.) Capital Times*

Moderator: NED BROOKS

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M E E T T H E P R E S S

MR. BROOKS: This is Ned Brooks inviting you to MEET THE PRESS.

Our guest today is the Chairman of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee of Congress, Representative Chet Holifield of California. He also is the Chairman of a House subcommittee dealing with the problems of civil defense.

And now here is the first question from Robert McCormick of NBC News.

MR. McCORMICK: Mr. Chairman, the Russians have finally put themselves and us at Geneva in such position as it would seem to make a nuclear test ban absolutely impossible. Do you think that this endangers any further, in any way, our security, or to put it another way, do you think we are in any greater danger now than we were before the collapse of these talks?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: No, I do not. I never had confidence in these talks from the very first. I visited Geneva and witnessed some of their conferences, and I felt all along that they were insincere.

MR. McCORMICK: Do you think now that it has become official it makes it essential we resume testing in the atmosphere?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I do not believe that the conducting of conferences on this subject should have any effect on whether we should test or should not test. I think the security of the United States and the free world is the paramount question, and that we should set our program along that line without regard to the conferences.

MR. McCORMICK: Do you think we should resume atmospheric testing?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I think the time will come—and that depends upon at least two points, maybe more—when it will be necessary to resume atmospheric testing. The first point, I think, is the status of our technological art, and the second would be the President's decision that all other factors would be favorable or at least not unfavorable to resuming testing when we consider the fact that the security of the free world may depend upon the weapons we test.

MR. McCORMICK: Do you think we should resume atmospheric testing soon?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I think that we will have to resume atmospheric testing within a few months.

MR. McCORMICK: Within a few months. I believe you have indicated, Mr. Chairman, that you thought the Russians probably made some gains at least in their series of tests last fall. In what respects do you think they might be now equal with us or ahead of us?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I believe that any nation that tests 40 or 50 different kinds of atomic weapons must of necessity gain some scientific and technical knowledge which they didn't have before. The Russians had a series of tests, different types of tests [devices], different sizes, and undoubtedly different conformations of weapons. We do not know yet—because the analysis is not complete—exactly how their technology has been improved, but we do know from some of the analyses that we have had that it has been improved in some instances.

MR. McCORMICK: Does that improvement indicate to you that we should speed up the resumption of our atmospheric tests? Is it that dangerous to us?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: It indicates to me that after some 36 months of moratorium on testing that there are many weapons which have been developed in our laboratories that do need testing, and we are testing some of those underground in Nevada at this time. I believe that every test that is possible should be made underground, from the standpoint of minimizing radioactivity. But if the time comes—and I believe that it will come—when certain types of weapons have to be tested which cannot be tested in the ground, then I think we need to test them in the air.

MR. CHILDS: Mr. Holifield, I'd like to go back to this matter of nuclear testing. President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara and others have said since the latest Soviet series that they believe the United States is still in the lead in nuclear weaponry. I know you follow this very closely. I wonder if you would agree with that?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I would agree with that based on the knowledge that I have. The degree that we are ahead, however, I think is impossible for the gentlemen you named to estimate or for me to estimate, because the analyses of the Russian tests have not been completed, and we may find more knowledge about that before they are completed.

MR. CHILDS: I know top secret information is available to you. Would your information lead you to believe that we were well ahead before the Soviet test series?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: Yes. I believe that some 36 months ago we were substantially ahead in variety of weapons

and probably in inventory of weapons. However, during the past 36 months the Soviets have been busy in their laboratories and now they have performed the tests which always come after laboratory work. On the other hand we may have been busy in our laboratories, but we have not performed the tests to verify our laboratory experiments and theories. Therefore it would seem reasonable to me that with such a tremendous number of tests the Soviets could have picked up a great deal of information, and they might be approaching parity with us.

MR. CHILDS: If the final analysis should show—and you say it isn't complete yet—that we are in the lead still, would you think even so it would be necessary to test in the atmosphere?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I certainly would, because weaponry does not stand still. The nation that stands still with weapons which may be in existence at any one time soon falls behind, and it is necessary in this particularly dangerous world that we live in that the United States retains its superiority and retain its lead rather than remaining even or falling behind, because there are many other advantages which the Soviets have that we do not have—geographic for one.

MR. CHILDS: Recently the Under Secretary of Defense, Mr. Roswell Gilpatric, said this: "We want to get away from the conception of a race, a competition, a struggle always to be ahead."

He seemed to be suggesting that there might be some point at which we could end this seesaw of first one ahead and then the other ahead. Do you see any point at which that might be possible?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I do not. I think this is the reasoning which they used when they started the moratorium on the tests. The Administration under Mr. Eisenhower started that moratorium in October of 1958, and time and events have proven that they were completely wrong because it takes two to make an agreement.

MR. CHILDS: Then you see no end to the nuclear arms race?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I do not at this time.

MR. CHILDS: Short of a nuclear war?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: No, I didn't say that. I do not consider there is any end to the armament race unless there is an agreement to stop, and it takes two to make the agreement. It takes the Soviets and the United States. I think the United States has gone far beyond the Soviets in trying to reach an agreement, and I wish that the agreement had been successful because I would like to see the arms race stop myself. But when the other fellow won't stop, then you are put into a des-

perate competition, and the only way to stay up with him is to keep on testing, in my opinion.

MR. RESTON: Mr. Chairman, to go to another problem for a moment, the whole atomic energy program rests on scientific information. Many of our scientists are working part time for the government, part time for private industry and the universities. Is there a problem here in the nation's conflict of interest laws at the moment?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: This is a complicated subject, and I think there could be a possible conflict of interest, particularly when certain scientists are privy to secret information and they are also consultants to competitive companies who are competing for orders in weaponry. I can see very easily where there could be a conflict of interest. I do not say that there is because this would be to challenge the integrity of some of these scientists, and I do not do that.

MR. RESTON: When President Eisenhower left the White House he said he was worried about the excessive influence of industry, of the military and science on government policy. Does this worry you?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: It does. I think that was one of the wisest things President Eisenhower has ever said.

MR. RAYMOND: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to clarify one point on the nuclear testing. I gather you would favor nuclear testing regardless of any advances that the Soviets might have made in this recent series. If that is so, why do you think we have delayed in this country the resumption of nuclear testing in the atmosphere?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: We have delayed because we thought for some 34 to 36 months that there was a chance of stopping testing in the atmosphere. We came to the conclusion, when the Soviets so abruptly turned a double somersault in the air and reversed their position against atmospheric testing by brutally and abruptly starting testing, that we had been dealing with people who were not sincere.

MR. RAYMOND: But Mr. Holifield, you said that you didn't believe that the Russians would come to an agreement with us, and I gather that there are others in government here who didn't believe that either. What I am trying to get from you, sir, is your view on why we did state—did the majority believe we would have an agreement or did many people——

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I think the President of the United States, who ordered the moratorium, thought we could come to an agreement. I didn't agree with him then, and time and events have proven that he was wrong.

MR. RAYMOND: Do you know, sir, whether the President

is one of a minority in this government who has been opposed to resuming nuclear tests in the atmosphere?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: Are you speaking of the present President?

MR. RAYMOND: Yes, sir.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: The present President has stated that he has ordered testing underground and he has ordered preparations for testing in the air when it is justified. It is up to him to make the decision. He has access to all information, a great deal more information than I have. I might criticize a position that he might take, but I might do it without knowing as much as he knows about the subject.

I believe that we will eventually have to test in the atmosphere. One of the reasons I believe this is that the United States today finds itself incapable from a military standpoint of stopping incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads. I think it is very imperative that we develop, perfect and test anti-missile missiles. When that time comes—and I am not saying it is going to be this week or next month or just when it will come—when that time comes, and if it is determined by the weapons experts that this anti-missile missile, cannot be tested underground, then I think it should be tested in the high reaches of the atmosphere or possibly above the atmosphere.

MR. RAYMOND: Sir, one important point on the question of agreements: Do you have any hope at all of at least a limited agreement with the Soviet Union that would prevent the spread of these atomic weapons to others, notably Red China?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: This is one of the fallacies of those who have been against testing. They think an agreement with the Soviet Union would stop the spread of weapons. While we were having the negotiations, you may recall, France went right ahead and tested weapons, and I cannot conceive of anyone being so naive as to think that Red China if it had the scientific capability would cease testing its weapons in order to attain the strength that it wants just because somebody else stopped.

MR. RAYMOND: What is your best estimate of whether or not the Communist Chinese will get nuclear weapons soon? How far do you think they have progressed?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: Any guess I would make would just be an estimate—

MR. RAYMOND: You have nothing better than just a guess on that subject, sir?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: That is right, because it depends upon their scientific technology, and I am not aware of just how strong their technology is.

MR. BROOKS: Mr. Chairman, you mentioned the anti-missile missile—the Nike-Zeus, I presume. How would you evaluate the information you have on the effectiveness of that weapon?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: This weapon, of course, is in process of development. It has not been developed to the extent that it is necessary to have. It is not effective at this time either in range or electronic guidance or in known weapon effects. The only way you are going to be able to find out whether a Nike-Zeus is effective or not is to explode one with a nuclear warhead, and then you will be able to get the weapons effect in the high atmosphere or in space.

MR. BROOKS: Do you think such a test should be made now?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I would have answered that question, "Yes," if you hadn't said "now." I think the tests should be made as soon as the technology indicates that it should be made.

MR. McCORMICK: Mr. Holifield, do you think the Russians were working on an anti-missile missile as part of their last series of tests?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I would be very naive if I did not think they were.

MR. McCORMICK: Do you know whether they have come even close?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: We cannot tell at this time from the analysis of the debris as to whether the weapons were pointed toward that particular problem or not.

MR. McCORMICK: I believe one Russian defense or military man bragged in a public speech that they now had an anti-missile missile.

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: Yes.

MR. McCORMICK: We don't have any information to back that up?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I am aware of that particular statement, and if I knew a great deal about it, I think it would be unwise for me to state in public my opinion on it.

MR. McCORMICK: One other question, Mr. Holifield: We are told that we have gained a great deal of propaganda advantage by not resuming atmospheric testing in spite of the fact the Russians did. How important do you think that factor is in deciding whether we do resume testing in the air?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I think that world opinion is quite important. I believe the strong attempt that we have made and the concessions that we have made to obtain a test ban treaty which was realistic and at the same time would stop the development of these weapons gave us a great deal of good opinion throughout the world. You have to balance a world opinion

along with the security of the nation. I note that the Soviets paid very little attention to world opinion. They reversed themselves completely and in effect flouted world opinion by a great number of tests in a very short length of time when they thought it was in their national interest to do so.

I don't know why the United States should be scared of doing the thing that is necessary to preserve the United States and the free world, if after sober consideration they decide [to act.].

MR. CHILDS: Mr. Chairman, the administration is proposing a shelter program to cost about \$700 million. That is far below what I believe the Gaither Report judged was necessary—I think \$10 billion—and I believe you favor a massive shelter program for civil defense.

Do you think there is very much point in proceeding with such a small program, since it falls so far below what you and others have considered essential?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: We are faced, of course, with the allocation of money for many different programs. The President has asked for about seven or eight times more money than was asked for by the previous Administration in the last year. He has started on what I consider a program to find out what kind of shelter spaces are available in America. If the \$700 million program which he has advocated is the end of his program, I would say that it is totally inadequate. My committee, after many years of study, came up with a figure of \$20 billion spread over a possible four- or five-year building period. This would be a little more than \$100 per person in the United States, and it was estimated by very fine people who figured this out—weapons effect people in the Pentagon—that in a certain type of war there would be at least 80 percent of the people who would otherwise be killed who could be saved by having radiation shelters—simple shelters—some three feet underground. This would cost as I say about \$20 billion. And so if the \$700 million advocated by the present Administration is the end of their program, I say it is totally inadequate. If it is a first step, then I would concede it is a feeble step.

MR. CHILDS: Have you any indication that this is a first step or that we will go on from here to spend much larger sums of money. Have you had any reason to believe that it is a first step?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: My subcommittee will start holding hearings on February 19 to give the Administration a chance to explain its program and to find out the answer to that very question.

MR. CHILDS: Some weapons experts have been saying that as the offensive steps up—that is, as the bombs get bigger and get into the 50, 70 and 100 megaton range, it is impossible to

have any adequate or really safe shelter, certainly within the area of blast and the area of firestorm. Would you say that is true?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: No, I would not say it is true, and I would say that in any kind of a war you have there are weapons that are larger than the defensive measure of the individual. A blockbuster, for instance, would make a foxhole a very feeble defense, but you can't put a blockbuster on every foxhole. And I would not deny any person the right to have a reasonable type of defense against any type of weapon. If he happened to be in the impact area of one of these large weapons, regardless of what kind of a shelter he would have, he would be lost. But if he was on the perimeter, many miles out where he would be killed by radioactivity, he could be saved in a shelter of the type I spoke of.

MR. RESTON: Mr. Chairman, everybody is talking about the military uses of atomic energy. What about the peaceful uses? Has this country made any important new breakthroughs in this area?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: We have made a consistent development in the field of peacetime uses, and I have pushed that very hard. In fact, I have pushed it harder than the Eisenhower Administration — or the Kennedy Administration — has pushed it.

We have made developments that are very valuable. Over 1100 industrial applications of atomic energy are now in being, and industry is using them. We have many curative devices in our hospitals—scanning devices for cancer and thyroid troubles and many other diagnostic methods that we use isotopes for. We have developed some very fine rust-free oats and seed for wheat, and there are other developments that we have made.

MR. RESTON: Does this present a problem on the local level? We are now distributing radioactive material to private industry, hospitals, universities all over the country.

What happens in the case of an accident? Do the local authorities—health, fire and police—are they well-informed enough to take care of something like this?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: It does present a problem, the same problem that was presented when radium was distributed to hospitals. It has to be handled carefully. It is the same problem that we have in deadly chemicals. We have to take great care.

I would say as the spread of this knowledge and this deadly material increases that we have to increase the policing requirements.

MR. RAYMOND: Mr. Holifield, on this civil defense program,

again, you have indicated you did not think it was big enough, particularly if it is to be limited to what it is now. In the past Congress has repeatedly cut civil defense appropriations requests. What do you think the Congress will do this time?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I think that the Congress might continue to do that because as up to this date there has been no effective civil defense program presented to the Congress of the United States. The men on Capitol Hill who deal in these defense weapons and these committees who handle these tremendous modern weapons of war, know the difference between an effective system and an ineffective one. I shall oppose any system that is not in my opinion effective in the future as I have in the past.

MR. RAYMOND: That includes the Administration's present program, sir, is that right?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: I am not at all impressed by what Administration is in power. My only thought is that the people of the United States should have protection against radioactivity in the event of a nuclear war. That is the primary objective in the viewpoint of my consideration and that of my committee.

MR. RAYMOND: Sir, on another point, you knew John McCone and still know him quite well, I assume—he was head of the Atomic Energy Commission. There has been some question raised about his appointment as head of the CIA.

Will you comment, sir, on his qualifications?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: As you know the members of the Senate are the ones who have the responsibility for confirming Presidential appointees, not the members of the House. I will say this, in my dealing with John McCone as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, that he dealt with me and my committee in fairness and in honesty and that he was an efficient administrator.

MR. McCORMICK: Mr. Holifield, you have been interested for a long time in the development of nuclear power plants for missiles and for airplanes. Are we making satisfactory progress in that field?

REPRESENTATIVE HOLIFIELD: In the field of central station power for use in our domestic economy we are not making adequate progress in my opinion. The aircraft program has been abolished, practically.

In the field of nuclear rockets, in the Rover program and some other programs, we are making good progress, I think.

MR. BROOKS: Gentlemen, on that optimistic note I believe we will have to suspend our questions.

Thank you very much, Congressman Holifield, for being with us.

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